

# U.S. Girls Make Unsettling Pop to Fool Us All on 'In A Poem Unlimited'

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Meghan Remy, like so many great songwriters before her, has discovered the potential of a catchy melody to hoodwink listeners. Ever listen to a cheery song and hum along, then pay attention to the lyrics and feel like a spider's crawled up your arm? That's the effect Remy's going for on *In A Poem Unlimited*, her sixth album with the unsettling pop project U.S. Girls.

On "Pearly Gates," Remy finds a creative way to get into heaven. "Velvet 4 Sale" is about killing a jealous ex-lover. "Rage Of Plastics" is about infertility in an industrial hellscape. "Incidental Boogie" is about domestic violence, "M.A.H." about the false promises of the Obama administration. All over music that twinkles like mirror balls and stomps like Marshall stacks.

The dominant style of songwriting in most pop genres is hyper-specificity, and though Remy's not exactly cryptic, she at least puts that extra step between her music and the listener: enjoying it as pop and then reckoning with what it has to say. It helps that her voice is cloaked deep in the music, so it's not our immediate instinct to pay razor-sharp attention to everything she sings.

Perhaps this is a relic of Remy's origins during the turn-of-the-'10s "hypnagogic pop" era, where cloaking bright melodies and poignant lyrics in scuzz and filth was still radical. Early U.S. Girls albums like *U.S. Girls On KRAAK* sounded better then than they do today, and most listeners today, even in indie, would rather hear bright production like what's on *In A Poem Unlimited*.

Perhaps part of why this record sounds so rich and full is its long list of collaborators. Two songs here weren't even written by Remy, and the rest have a rich cast of co-writers, co-producers and session cats that'd make Kanye blush. But it's so clearly the work of a central artistic vision that it almost feels as if Remy is daring us to pull out the old "she doesn't write her own songs" card.

There's a lot going on here, and by the time the relentless forward chug of "Time" peters out you may feel a little tired. If it feels a little cluttered, that's probably on purpose. But the more Remy cakes on, the more time passes between when you're bobbing your head along to the beat and when you're spitting out your drink. Then you put it on again to see what you've missed.

-Daniel Bromfield

